(b) if so, whether 20 cinema houses in the city are violating safety norms with impunity;

(c) whether Government have failed to check the safety norms in the different parts of the country;

(d) if so, the specific reasons therefor; and

(e) the concrete steps Government propose to take in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MOHD. MAQBOOL DAR): (a) to (e) Government have seen the news-item in question which pertains to alleged lack of infrastructure in the cinema halls located in Ludhiana, Punjab to prevent occurrence of fire. The subject of fire safety being a State subject, it is essentially for the State Governments concerned to take appropriate action. The Central Government on its part has been sending advisories to the State Governments on the measures to be taken by the State Governments to strengthen fire safety measures. Financial assistance has also been made available to the States on the recommendations of the Xth financial commission & through GIC loans to strengthen infrastructure relating to Fire Services.

Bomb Blasts

75. SHRI IQBAL SINGH: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of bomb blasts which took place in the different parts of the country during the year 1996-97 and till date, particularly in Punjab;

(b) the number of people killed in these bomb blasts, State-wise; and

(c) the preventive measures Government propose to take to check this rising trend of violence in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MOHD. MAQBOOL DAR): (a) to (c) Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Devolution of Financial Powers to the States

76. SHRI MD. SALIM: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Standing Committee on the Home Ministry has asked Government to provide all the information to the States to discuss the devolution of financial powers to the States and also the Article 356 of the Constitution; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MOHD. MAQBOOL DAR): (a) and (b) Since its constitution in December 1996, the Standing Committee of the Inter-State Council has held four meetings. Following subjects were discussed in the said meetings:—

(i) Alternative Scheme of devolution of share in Central Taxes to States.

(ii) Amendments to article 356 of the Constitution.

(iii) Centre-State Financial Relations.

A meeting of the Inter-State Council was also held on 17.7.1997 to discuss the above items. A major achievement of this meeting was approval of the Alternative Scheme of devolution of share in Central taxes to States. The share of the States will be 29% with effect from 1.4.1996. This will be reviewed in December 1997 with a view to improving it. There was no consensus on the question of amending article 356 of the Constitution. However, efforts will continue to evolve a consensus on this issue.